

SENATE RESOLUTION 183

By Akbari

A RESOLUTION to honor and remember the Emanuel Nine.

WHEREAS, on June 17, 2015, a peaceful Wednesday evening prayer meeting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Charleston, South Carolina, ended in tragedy as an armed gunman killed nine African-American parishioners; and

WHEREAS, the killer, Dylann Roof, sat in Emanuel AME Church, the oldest African Methodist Episcopal church in the South, for more than an hour before opening fire, shooting twelve people and killing nine before escaping; and

WHEREAS, as a manhunt began to search for Dylann Roof, his victims, the Emanuel Nine as they became collectively known, were identified as grieving family, friends, and community members came together to try to make sense out of a senseless tragedy; and

WHEREAS, the Emanuel Nine are the Reverend Clementa Pinckney, Cynthia Hurd, the Reverend Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Tywanza Sanders, Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, the Reverend Daniel Simmons, Sr., and Myra Thompson; and

WHEREAS, the senior pastor of Emanuel AME, the Reverend Clementa Pinckney was a fifteen-year-member of the South Carolina General Assembly and the beloved husband of Jennifer Benjamin and father of Eliana and Malana; he received his bachelor's degree from Allen University in 1995 and his master's degree from the University of South Carolina in 1999; and

WHEREAS, Cynthia Hurd was a thirty-one-year veteran of the Charleston County Public Library; she managed the John L. Dart Library for twenty-one years before heading the St. Andrews Regional Library; after her death, the branch was renamed the Cynthia Graham Hurd St. Andrews Library; and

WHEREAS, a pastor at Emanuel AME, the Reverend Sharonda Coleman-Singleton was a speech therapist and high school girls track and field coach at Goose Creek High School and the devoted mother of three children; and

WHEREAS, Tywanza Sanders, or Ty, as he was known, was only twenty-six years old and had received his bachelor's degree in business administration from Allen University the year before; and

WHEREAS, Ethel Lance attended Emanuel AME for most of her seventy years and had worked at the church as one of its custodians as well; the treasured mother and grandmother was a custodian at Charleston's Gaillard Municipal Auditorium from 1968 to 2002; and

WHEREAS, a cousin of Ms. Lance, Susie Jackson was eighty-seven years old on that fateful day and a longtime member of Emanuel AME Church; and

WHEREAS, choir member Depayne Middleton-Doctor was an admissions coordinator at the Charleston campus of her alma mater, Southern Wesleyan University, having previously directed a community development program in Charleston County; she was also the doting mother of four children; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Daniel Simmons, Sr., was the retired pastor of another church in the Charleston area; although the seventy-four-year-old survived the initial attack in Emanuel AME Church, he died in a hospital operating room from his injuries; and

WHEREAS, Myra Thompson was the wife of the Reverend Anthony Thompson, who was the vicar of Holy Trinity Reformed Episcopal Church in Charleston; and

WHEREAS, after an overnight search by local and federal law enforcement, Dylann Roof was located in North Carolina after a citizen reported seeing his car in the area; officers pulled the vehicle over onto a dirt road and two officers approached the vehicle with weapons drawn, although one holstered his weapon as he approached the driver's side window. More officers arrived on the scene as Dylann Roof exited the vehicle, was frisked for weapons, was placed in handcuffs while facing his car, and moved to the police vehicle; and

WHEREAS, Dylann Roof was later convicted in federal court of thirty-three federal charges, including hate crimes, and sentenced to death; he also pleaded guilty to state charges, including nine counts of murder, three counts of attempted murder, and possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony, and was later sentenced to nine consecutive sentences of life without parole; and

WHEREAS, in the aftermath of the Emanuel AME Church shooting, the words of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Eulogy for the Martyred Children were remembered, as he said that in death, those three little girls told America "that we must be concerned not merely about who murdered them, but about the system, the way of life, the philosophy which produced the murderers"; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor and remember the Emanuel Nine, the Reverend Clementa Pinckney, Cynthia Hurd, the Reverend Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Tywanza Sanders, Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, the Reverend Daniel Simmons, Sr., and Myra Thompson, on the fifth anniversary of their deaths following a mass shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.